

Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and 66 Tribal Nations

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**1 — Filming In Dealey Plaza Snarls Downtown Dallas Traffic, KERA, 10/7/2015**

<http://keranews.org/post/filming-dealey-plaza-snarls-downtown-dallas-traffic>

Actor James Franco is in Dallas, shooting the miniseries "11/22/63," which is based off a Stephen King novel of the same name. It's about a time traveler who tries to stop President John F. Kennedy's assassination. To keep the series authentic, the crew is filming in Dealey Plaza. And that means potential star sightings -- and traffic.

**2 — Navajo ask EPA for rolling mine spill compensation , Greenwire, 10/6/2015**

<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2015/10/06/stories/1060025911>

The Navajo Nation requested that U.S. EPA supply formal assurances that "all claims, known and unknown" stemming from the Gold King mine spill will be fully paid out. Navajo Nation Attorney General Ethel Branch raised concerns about EPA's claims process, asking the agency to confirm that accepting compensation does not eliminate the potential for future claims, as tribal members are in need of immediate assistance.

**3 — Private water well screening set for Parker County , Star-Telegram, 10/6/2015**

<http://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/community/weatherford-star-telegram/wt-news/article38008284.html>

The Texas Well Owner Network will offer water well screenings in October for Parker County to give residents the opportunity to have their well water screened. The screening is presented by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service offices in counties in partnership with the Texas Water Resources Institute.

**4 — Texas plant restarts 1 week after explosion, Greenwire, 10/6/15**

<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2015/10/06/stories/1060025913>

A Pasadena, Texas, chemical plant where four workers were burned in an explosion last week will resume operating even though little has been disclosed about how the facility will ensure safety. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration "released the Pasadena facility to resume operation," SunEdison spokesman Gordon Handelsman said.

**5 — Playing politics with people's water along US-Mexico border, Reveal, 10/3/2015**

<https://www.revealnews.org/article/playing-politics-with-peoples-water-along-us-mexico-border/>

Two years ago, the discovery of dangerous bacteria in the drinking water of two working-class communities along the Rio Grande in Texas set off alarms among state regulators and investigators. Their arrival sparked hope among residents that perhaps, finally, something might be done about longstanding problems with their water.

**6 — Benzene in traffic emissions tied to childhood leukemia , Reuters, 10/6/2015**

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/06/us-health-airpollution-kids-leukemia-idUSKCN0S02Q520151006?feedType=RSS&feedName=healthNews>

Traffic pollution near the home – and specifically, benzene in the air - increases the risk of one type of childhood leukemia, according to a nationwide study in France. Leukemia, or cancer of the blood cells, is the most common cancer among children younger than age 15, according to the U.S. National Cancer Institute.

**7 — EPA Officials to Testify at October 8 VW Hearing in Congress, NY Times, 10/6/2015**

[http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/10/06/business/06reutersvolkswagen-emissions-congress-witnesses.html?src=busIn&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/10/06/business/06reutersvolkswagen-emissions-congress-witnesses.html?src=busIn&_r=0)

Two senior officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will testify on Thursday at a congressional hearing on the Volkswagen AG emissions cheating scandal, the oversight committee said on Tuesday.

**8 — Halliburton offers settlements to property owners in lawsuits , Oklahoman, 10/4/2015**

<http://newsok.com/halliburtonoffers-settlements-to-property-owners-in-lawsuits/article/5451109>

Some four years after testing found pollution from spent rocket fuel in the groundwater, Halliburton is offering settlements to about 130 property owners after the chemical compound ammonium perchlorate showed up in their private wells.

**9 — Denton Announces Renewable Energy Plan , Texas Tribune, 10/6/2015**

<http://www.texastribune.org/2015/10/06/denton-announces-renewable-energy-plan/>

Denton announced a lofty plan Tuesday that aims to make the North Texas city one of the cleanest energy providers in the state. Mayor Chris Watts announced a Denton Municipal Electric plan to have 70 percent of the city's electricity generated from renewable sources like wind and solar power by 2019, up from 40 percent.

**10 — Keystone XL developer seeks different approval for route , New OK, 10/6/2015**

<http://newsok.com/keystonexl-developer-seeks-different-approval-for-route/article/5451734>

The Canadian company that wants to build the Keystone XL pipeline is taking steps to circumvent one of the major roadblocks in Nebraska. But in seeking approval Monday for the same contentious route through the state, TransCanada could create another round of lengthy delays in an already drawn-out process.

**11 — New Dietary Guidelines Will Not Include Sustainability Goal , NPR, 10/6/2015**

<http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/10/06/446369955/new-dietary-guidelines-will-not-include-sustainability-goal>

When it comes to eating well, should we consider both the health of our bodies and of the planet? Earlier this year, as we reported, the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee concluded that a diet rich in plant-based foods promotes good health — and is also more environmentally sustainable. And, for the first time, the panel recommended that food system sustainability be incorporated into the federal government's dietary advice.

**12 — US forecast calls for lower heating bills this winter , Tulsa World, 10/4/2015**

[http://www.tulsaworld.com/business/energy/us-forecast-calls-for-lower-heating-bills-this-winter/article\\_18ed4c23-e4db-58b6-ad8b-4e0b1da5af6a.html](http://www.tulsaworld.com/business/energy/us-forecast-calls-for-lower-heating-bills-this-winter/article_18ed4c23-e4db-58b6-ad8b-4e0b1da5af6a.html)

Some U.S. households can expect to save hundreds of dollars this winter with a drop in heating bills, thanks to a combination of lower energy prices and warmer weather across most of the country, the U.S. Energy Department predicted Tuesday. The department's annual outlook calls for lower heating bills, with the biggest savings for those who use propane or oil to heat their homes.

**13-- Regulators urge EPA to start crackdown on NOx emissions , Greenwire, 10/6/2015**

<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2015/10/06/stories/1060025922>

Two state regulators' groups and California are calling on U.S. EPA to set a new national limit for nitrogen oxides pollution from big trucks as the agency puts in place a more stringent ozone standard. Emitted by vehicle tailpipes, NOx is a key component of ground-level ozone. The regulators say a lower limit for heavy-duty vehicles would help them achieve the reductions called for under the ozone standard that EPA finalized last week.

**14-- In One Corner Of Dallas County, 100 People Live Without Running Water, KERA, 9/29/2015**

<http://keranews.org/post/onecorner-dallas-county-100-people-live-without-running-water>

Nobody in Sandbranch has a running faucet. A lucky few have wells and small tanks in the backyard. They use that water to flush toilets, maybe wash some clothes. Even when the water is boiled, it's not drinkable. Pastor Eugene Keahen twists the top off the water tank at Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, the one remaining community institution here, to reveal green algae in patches the size of a phone book.



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# Filming In Dealey Plaza Snarls Downtown Dallas Traf $\ddot{o}$

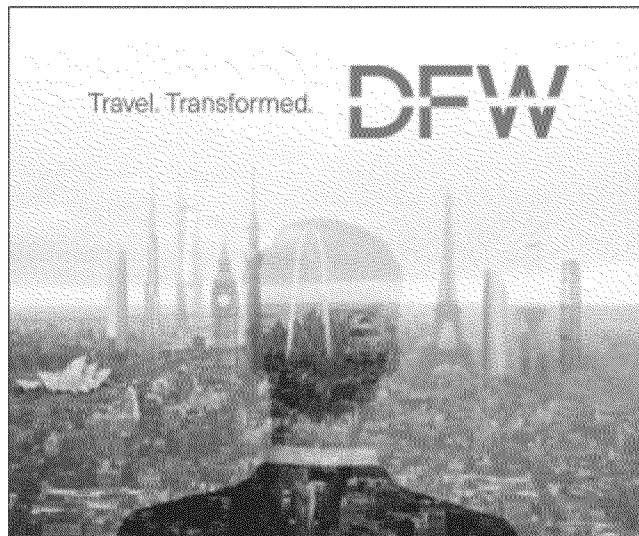
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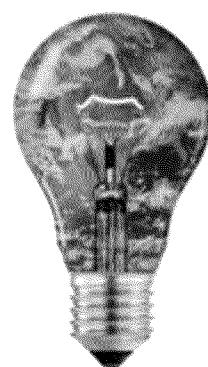


*Looking on to the set of "11/22/63."*

KAT CHOW/KERA NEWS



Actor James Franco is in Dallas, shooting the miniseries "11/22/63," which is based off a Stephen King novel of the same name. It's about a time traveler who tries to stop President John F. Kennedy's assassination. To keep the series authentic, the crew is filming in Dealey Plaza. And that means potential star sightings -- and traffic.



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*The KERA News radio story.*

“It looks like we stepped back in time,” says Hannah Wenzel, who works a few blocks from the plaza. “[There are] a bunch of older cars, people dressed like a blast from the past.”

She’s standing by the corner of North Houston and Elm Streets, right at the edge of the series set.

She and two friends are looking into the distance at a guy on set who’s sitting in a vintage truck. They’re certain he’s Franco.

Just a few feet behind them, off-set, there are drivers in more modern cars in bumper to bumper traffic. Definitely no James Franco sightings here -- just police, helping direct cars.

“It takes a lot of police officers. I think they’ve got somewhere in the neighborhood of 40 or 50 officers working,” says Dallas OEM commissioner Janis Burklund. “I hope that people will just be patient with the traffic tie-ups; don’t pull out in the intersection ... and cause gridlock. Just be a little patient, and we’ll all get through it.”

She says all this traffic congestion may be worth it.

“Film production comes in and they spend a lot of money in a very short period of time in our community, and some stay longer and spend even more money,” Burklund says. She estimates the OEM company is spending about \$1.5 million while it’s in town.

Filming will end Thursday.

Here are the street closures, via the Dallas Police Department:

Street Closures (Oct 6th: 7:30am - 8:30pm) & (Oct. 7th & 8th: 7:30am - 7:30pm)

400 - 600 Elm Street WB between Riverfront and Market Street.

400 - 600 Main Street E/B & WB between Riverfront and Market Street.

100 S. Houston Street N/B & S/B. 100-200 N. Houston Street N/B & S/B between Commerce Street & Pacific Ave.

Ross Avenue @ Houston Street (soft closure/tapering of traffic cones).

Street Closures (3:00pm - 7:00pm) (Oct 6th through 8th)

600 - 800 Elm Street WB between Market Street and Lamar Street.

600 - 800 Main Street E/B & WB between Market Street and Lamar Street.

100 S. Austin Street @ Main Street.

Intermittent Traffic Control (after 9:00am) Limited to 1-3 minute intervals.

Commerce Street E/B between Riverfront Blvd and Houston Street.

Interstate 35E/ Commerce Street S/B exit ramp to Commerce Street.

Interstate 35E/ Commerce Street N/B Exit ramp to Commerce Street.

Reunion Blvd Service Road(s) to Commerce Street (behind the Hyatt)

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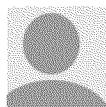
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**WATER POLLUTION:**  
**Navajo ask EPA for rolling mine spill compensation**

*Published: Tuesday, October 6, 2015*

The Navajo Nation requested that U.S. EPA supply formal assurances that "all claims, known and unknown" stemming from the Gold King mine spill will be fully paid out.

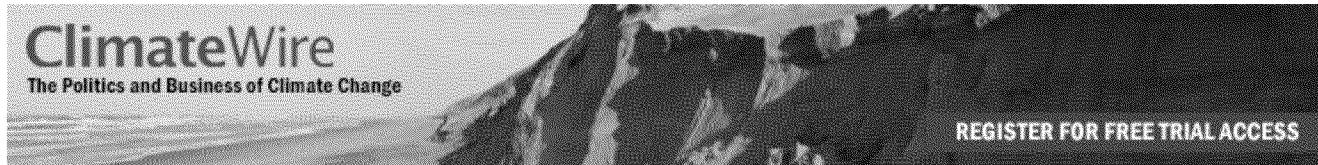
Navajo Nation Attorney General Ethel Branch raised concerns about EPA's claims process, asking the agency to confirm that accepting compensation does not eliminate the potential for future claims, as tribal members are in need of immediate assistance.

"We need to assure our people, who are concerned for their futures, that their injuries will not go ignored," Branch said in a statement.

Last week, Navajo President Russell Begaye sent a letter to the Federal Emergency Management Agency asking for a preliminary assessment of damage caused by the Aug. 5 spill, which sent 3 million gallons of mining wastewater into the Animas River in southwest Colorado near the Navajo reservation ([Greenwire](#), Oct. 1).

FEMA already rejected a request for a disaster-recovery coordinator to lead the federal response (Jesse Paul, [Denver Post](#), Oct. 5). -- DTB

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WEATHERFORD NEWS OCTOBER 6, 2015

# Private water well screening set for Parker County

## HIGHLIGHTS

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service offers services

Water well screenings in October

Samples tested for common contaminants

The Texas Well Owner Network will offer water well screenings in October for Parker County to give residents the opportunity to have their well water screened.

The screening is presented by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service offices in counties in partnership with the Texas Water Resources Institute.

"Private water wells should be tested annually," said John W. Smith, AgriLife Extension program specialist, College Station.

He said those submitting samples should use only sampling bags and bottles from the Parker County AgriLife Extension office and follow instructions to ensure accurate results. A \$10 per sample fee will be collected when bags and bottles are picked up by participants. Bottles and bags are now available. Only 100 samples can be tested during the testing period so be sure to stop by soon and pick the sampling materials before they are all handed out.

The date, time and location for the screening will be: Oct. 20, sample bags and bottles should be turned in from 8:30-9:30 a.m. at the AgriLife Extension office for Parker County, 604 N. Main Street in Weatherford. A follow-up meeting to explain screening results will be the next evening at 6 p.m., Oct. 21, at the Parker County Extension office. Jillian North, Assistant General Manager from the Upper Groundwater Conservation District will also discuss ongoing programs.

Samples will be screened for common contaminants, including total coliform bacteria, E. coli, nitrate-nitrogen and salinity.

Smith said the presence of E. coli bacteria in water indicates that waste from humans or warm-blooded animals may have contaminated the water. Water contaminated with E. coli bacteria is more likely to also have pathogens present that can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea or other symptoms.

"Water with nitrate-nitrogen at levels of 10 parts per million is considered unsafe for human consumption," Smith said. "These nitrate levels above 10 parts per million can disrupt the ability of blood to carry oxygen throughout the body, resulting in a condition called methemoglobinemia. Infants less than 6 months of age and young livestock are most susceptible."

Salinity as measured by total dissolved solids will also be determined for each sample. Water with high levels may leave deposits and have a salty taste, and using water with high levels for irrigation may damage soil or plants.

Smith said it is extremely important for those submitting samples to be at the meeting to receive results, learn corrective measures for identified problems and to improve understanding of private well management. The meeting is open to the public, you do not have to have submitted a sample to attend.

For more information, call 817-598-6168. To learn more about programs offered through the Texas Well Owner Network or to find additional publications and resources, go to <http://twon.tamu.edu>.

Support for the Texas Well Owner Network program is provided through Clean Water Act nonpoint source funding from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



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**CHEMICALS:****Texas plant restarts 1 week after explosion**

Published: Tuesday, October 6, 2015

A Pasadena, Texas, chemical plant where four workers were burned in an explosion last week will resume operating even though little has been disclosed about how the facility will ensure safety.

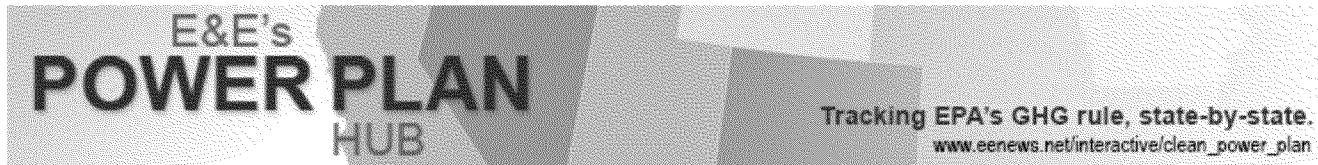
The Occupational Safety and Health Administration "released the Pasadena facility to resume operation," SunEdison spokesman Gordon Handelsman said.

OSHA, though, has no authority to shut a plant down. And safety experts say it takes well longer than a week to determine the root cause of a chemical safety incident.

SunEdison said in a report to Harris County's pollution control agency it believed the explosion resulted from a release of silane gas, which it uses to produce silicon wafers for electronics and the solar industry. OSHA cited the company for several workplace safety violations in 2011.

"You can replace a valve and have the confidence to start up again," said Shakeel Kadri, executive director of the Center for Chemical Process Safety, "but if you've had multiple issues with leaking valves, it can be a false confidence" (Collette/Dempsey, *Houston Chronicle*, Oct. 5). -- SP

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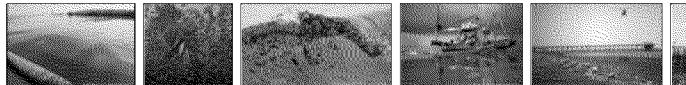
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# Louisiana guaranteed \$5 billion of \$8.8 billion BP natural resource damage payments



ELLIS LUCIA / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE Spilled oil often gets over containment boom and then is trapped on the marsh side as in the marsh adjacent to Pass a Loutre in lower Plaquemines Parish south and east of Venice, La., Sunday, May 30, 2010.

Andrew Boyd / NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

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Louisiana's [coastal marshes](#) will be the key focus of \$8.8 billion BP will pay to restore vast natural resource losses caused by the [Deepwater Horizon oil spill](#) in 2010, part of a \$20.8 billion settlement with federal and Gulf state governments announced Monday (Oct. 5).

The environmental portion also includes targeting significant money on Gulf of Mexico resources, federal and state trustees said. Louisiana, which suffered most of the oil spill's environmental damage, will be guaranteed \$5 billion of natural resource damage assessment money.

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## oceans of trouble

1996 Pulitzer Prize-winning series



Oceans of Trouble: Are the world's fisheries doomed?

- From March 24 to 31, 1996, The Times-Picayune told the story of the struggle of the world's fishers against multiple threats of pollution, overfishing and habitat loss.

"This investment of funds particularly focuses on restoring Louisiana coastal marshes as an essential element of the preferred alternative," said the Damage Assessment Restoration Plan released Monday by the trustees.

"Given both the extensive impacts to Louisiana marsh habitats and species and the critical role that these habitats across the Gulf of Mexico play for many injured resources and for the overall productivity of the Gulf, coastal and nearshore habitat restoration is the most appropriate and practicable mechanism for restoring the ecosystem-level linkages disrupted by this spill," the document said.

But the report said that while coastal and nearshore habitats are significant, "aspects of this vast and diverse injury will require additional restoration, especially to those resources that spend some or all of their lives in the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico."

The announcements were made as officials and experts unveiled the final version of the comprehensive settlement of federal and state claims against BP for the oil spill. Federal and state trustees also released their "Damage Assessment Restoration Plan" and environmental impact statement required under the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

The settlement agreement and restoration plan are subject to a 60-day public comment period that will include hearings in New Orleans and Houma.

- [Read the oil spill settlement papers.](#) Includes link for filing comments on the settlement through Dec. 4.
- [Read the Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan and the Environmental Impact Statement.](#) Includes link for filing public comments on the plan and statement through Dec. 4.

#### Gargantuan damage to species, environment

The restoration plan and impact statement stressed the immensity of the uncontrolled release of 3.19 million barrels of oil -- 134 million gallons -- into the Gulf of Mexico and its effects.

"The volume of oil discharged during the Deepwater Horizon spill was equivalent to the Exxon Valdez oil spill re-occurring in the same location every week for 12 weeks," the restoration plan said.

The report said the injuries caused by the spill "cannot be fully described at the level of a single species, a single habitat type, or a single region."

"Rather, the injuries affected such a wide array of linked resources over such an enormous area that the effects of the Deepwater Horizon Spill must be described as constituting an ecosystem-level injury."

According to the resource restoration plan, the BP spill's surface slick covered at least 43,300 square miles over 113 days in 2010, contaminating an estimated 75 billion cubic yards of Gulf water -- an amount equal to 40 times the average daily discharge of the Mississippi River at New Orleans.

The report estimated Gulf resources destroyed by the spill include billions of fish, oysters and invertebrate species; tens of thousands of birds; close to 200,000 sea turtles; and more than half the bottlenose dolphins in Barataria Bay and the Mississippi Sound.

To both restore the damage and to compensate for the lost recreational opportunities by the spill, the plan recommends a portfolio of restoration projects that focus on coastal and nearshore habitat restoration, including improving water quality in priority watersheds.

A graphic from the Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan outlines the different focuses of the restoration program, including nearshore marine ecosystem, beach habitat, human uses, birds, sea turtles, species living in the Gulf water column, marine

#### oil spill settlement

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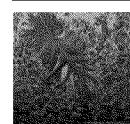
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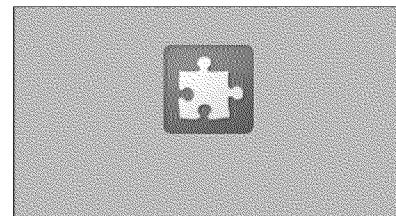
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How they assessed environmental damage

mammals and benthic resources living on the Gulf bottom.

*Kate Sweeney for NOAA*

complete, the report said.

During a pre-assessment phase, scientists gathered baseline pre-spill information on the area that was injured, even as they were collecting information on the impacts of the spill. That process included assessing the oil's impact over 1,300 miles of shoreline habitat, visibly oiled and dead birds, sea turtles and marine mammals, lost recreational opportunities, and impacts to resources living in the water column in the Gulf.

A restoration planning phase included an assessment of injuries to both natural resources and the human recreational services they provide, which required the development of several hundred individual scientific assessment studies.

Using information developed through the injury assessments, the trustees developed the programmatic restoration alternatives announced Monday.

Even as the assessments were underway, federal agencies and the states also conducted some emergency restoration projects, in part funded by a \$1 billion advance payment from BP. As of October, these early restoration program included 64 projects totaling \$832 million.

The plan released Monday is "programmatic," meaning it recommends broad outlines for the types of restoration projects to be funded, but leaves the specifics to future decisions to be made by federal-state teams of trustees.

However, it emphasizes restoration in areas known to be injured by the spill, including Louisiana.

### Louisiana's share of BP Natural Resource Damage money

Wetlands, Coastal and Nearshore habitats	\$4 billion
Habitat Projects on Federally Managed Lands	\$50 million
Early Restoration (Through Phase IV)	\$259.6 million
Nutrient Reduction	\$20 million
Sea Turtles	\$10 million
Marine Mammals	\$50 million
Submerged Aquatic Vegetation	\$22 million
Birds	\$148.5 million
Early Restoration, Birds	\$71.9 million
Oysters	\$26 million
Early Restoration Oysters	\$14.9 million
Provide, Enhance Recreational Opportunities	\$38 million
Early Restoration Recreational Opportunities	\$22 million
Monitoring and Adaptive Management	\$225 million
Administrative Oversight, Comprehensive Planning	\$33 million
Total	\$5 billion

*Draft Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan*

Chandeleur Islands, and the acquisition of some land for coastal and marine conservation purposes.

The complex damage assessment process included several stages, which was one reason it took five years to

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The plan also proposes assistance for agricultural conservation and forestry management programs aimed at reducing fertilizer and other nutrients entering coastal wetlands.

In the deepwater area, the plan recommends a variety of approaches for restoring lost fisheries, including reducing the impact of "ghost fishing" by paying to remove derelict fishing gear. It also suggests reducing catches of untargeted fish species by commercial fishermen by replacing their gear with new hooks that are targeted to more populous species.

Voluntary programs would be supported to promote reduction in menhaden catches and to provide Gulf shrimpers with more selective gear for their nets to reduce bycatch.

Projects must be approved by feds, state teams

Individual projects paid for with the \$5 billion set aside for Louisiana must be approved by a new Louisiana "trustee implementation group" made up of federal and state agencies.

The federal representatives will include members from the Department of Interior, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency. The Louisiana counterparts will include members of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Department of Natural Resources.

Decisions made by the Louisiana implementation group must be supported by both the federal trustees as a group and by the state trustees as a group.

Similar groups will make decisions on projects in the other Gulf States, while the federal trustees will make decisions on projects that affect the deepwater Gulf of Mexico. A group made up of both federal and state trustees will decide on Gulf-wide coastal projects.

Louisiana also will get more than \$787 million in Clean Water Act penalties as part of the settlement, with most of that money also targeted for coastal restoration. That money is being administered under the federal Restore Act by the Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, a body also made up of the federal and state BP spill trustees.

Trillions of larval fish killed

Some of the estimated totals of damage in the assessment are staggering. The trustees estimated the spill killed 2 trillion to 5 trillion larval fish, as well as 37 trillion to 68 trillion invertebrates, in surface waters. They also said between 86 million and 26 billion fish larvae and between 10 million and 7 billion planktonic invertebrates were killed in deeper waters.

"The larval loss likely translated into millions to billions of fish that would have reached a year old," the report said. "Larval fish that were killed but would not have survived to age 1 are also a significant loss; they are an energy source for other components of the ecosystem."

The spill resulted in as many as 8.3 billion oysters lost over 155 miles of subtidal areas along the Gulf Coast, and addition 6 million oysters lost a year because of the loss of oyster cultch.

Also lost were up to 7,600 large and 166,000 small sea turtles, with another 33,700 hatchlings injured.

The damage extended to nearly all stocks of marine mammals that overlap with the oil spill footprint, including bottlenose dolphins and Bryde's whales.

"The Barataria Bay and Mississippi Sound bottlenose dolphin stocks were two of the most severely injured populations, with a 52 percent and 62 percent maximum reduction in their population sizes, respectively," the report said.

The report also sets aside \$15 million for Gulf-wide efforts to preserve the endangered Gulf sturgeon.

#### How to attend public meetings and get copies of the plan

Two public meetings on the proposed restoration plan are scheduled for Louisiana. Here are the locations and times:

Houma, Oct. 19, 5 p.m. open house and 6 p.m. meeting, at the Courtyard by Marriott, 142 Library Blvd.

New Orleans, Oct. 26, 5 p.m. open house and 6 p.m. meeting, at the Hilton Garden Inn New Orleans Convention Center, Garden Ballroom, 1001 S. Peters St.

Copies of the plan are being held in public repositories established at:

New Orleans Public Library, 219 Loyola Ave., New Orleans;

St. Tammany Parish Library, 310 W. 21st Ave., Covington;

East Baton Rouge Parish Library, 7711 Goodwood Blvd., Baton Rouge;

Jefferson Parish East Bank Regional Library, 4747 W. Napoleon Ave., Metairie;

Jefferson Parish West Bank Regional Library, 2751 Manhattan Blvd., Harvey;

Plaquemines Parish Library, 8442 Highway 23, Belle Chasse;

St. Bernard Parish Library, 1125 E. St. Bernard Hwy., Chalmette.

Here's a copy of the introduction and executive summary of the BP oil spill Damage Assessment and Recovery Plan.

To print the document, click the "Original Document" link to open the original PDF. At this time it is not possible to print the document with annotations.

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Gimmee

14 hours ago

While the numbers certainly sound staggering they needs to be a reality check. What are the total populations that would be found in the area? i.e. did the spill impact 50%, 10%, or 1% of the resident population.

Will be interesting to read the report and see if the writers disclose the significant error in their calculations. A lot of the numbers appear to be theoretical in nature and based upon small amounts of data and new modeling.

Like Reply



Sandy Rosenthal

16 hours ago

Hoping its not too late for the unvarnished truths to finally be put out there. Such as this:  
"..Some of the estimated totals of damage in the assessment are staggering..."

1 Like Reply



bannwarr

1 day ago

No need for your concerns.

The lawyers/politicians have already decided what to do with their windfall.

Like Reply



inkedieu

1 day ago

Coastal restoration should be the main priority in Louisiana.

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## Playing politics with people's water along US-Mexico border



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## LISTEN TO THIS STORY



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But not a drop to drink...



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Two years ago, the discovery of dangerous bacteria in the drinking water of two working-class communities (<http://apps.texastribune.org/undrinkable/rio-bravo-el-cenizo/>) along the Rio Grande in Texas set off alarms among state regulators and investigators. Their arrival sparked hope among residents that perhaps, finally, something might be done about longstanding problems with their water.

## THIS STORY WAS PRODUCED WITH



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Now, however, it appears that efforts to hold anyone responsible for the 2013 public health crisis in Rio Bravo and El Cenizo are sputtering to an inconclusive end. One former water treatment plant supervisor has pledged guilty (<http://www.texastribune.org/2015/08/21/defendant-pleads-guilty-webb-county-water-trial/>) to fudging records to hide water quality problems. A

second was acquitted of the same accusation after a trial (<http://www.texastribune.org/2015/08/19/trial-begins-over-undrinkable-water-webb-county/>) in August.

Of six other lower-level water department workers indicted on similar charges last fall, three await court hearings, two were referred to a pretrial diversion program and one's case was dismissed.

Still unanswered, local activists say, are larger questions (<http://www.texastribune.org/2015/08/20/lawyers-state-responsible-undrinkable-water-webb-c/>) about how the relatively new water treatment plant operated by Webb County was allowed to fall into such disrepair that it became a public health threat and whether any local officials might be held accountable.

“We spent so much time on this … we were hoping for something good to come out of all this. I don’t know where we’re going from here,” said Guadalupe Elizondo, a Rio Bravo resident and longtime activist seeking to improve conditions in the former colonia. “Who’s guilty, then? Nobody? Did we make all this up?”

The county continues struggling to fix major problems with key equipment at

the Rio Bravo Water Treatment Plant, a \$12 million facility partly funded by the state that opened in 2006. Shortly after the E. coli discovery in 2013, state regulators slapped a \$60,000 fine

([http://www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/CIO/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.download&AGY\\_DKT\\_NUM\\_TXT=2013-2014-MLM-E](http://www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/CIO/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.download&AGY_DKT_NUM_TXT=2013-2014-MLM-E)) on the county and demanded that the issues be fixed – but many still have not been. (The Texas Tribune previously reported on the problems in its series Undrinkable (<http://apps.texastribune.org/undrinkable/>)).

“There’s so many people that share responsibility in this failure,” said Webb County District Attorney Isildo Alaniz. “How high did it go? That’s a hard question to answer.”

Alaniz said he does not foresee any further criminal charges related to the water treatment plant.

But an investigative report provided to the Tribune after the August trial provides glimpses of the workings – and dysfunctions – of Webb County politics and how those dynamics may have contributed to the breakdown of a system charged with providing safe drinking water to nearly 10,000 people.

The Tribune reviewed more than a thousand pages of documents, including reports by the Texas Rangers and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, along with hours of recorded conversations between investigators and Johnny Amaya, the county's former water utilities director, who was acquitted in August of charges of falsifying water quality reports.

What emerges is a picture of a water department that was an important part of the county's system of political patronage – even as one of its biggest and most prized assets, the Rio Bravo Water Treatment Plant, fell into a state of disrepair.

Since its opening, much of the plant's equipment never has worked properly, including the disinfection unit and computer systems, according to current employees, state records and the investigative report. When the plant opened, none of its operators had the proper licenses, the records show. (Today, plant supervisors say the county still is struggling to comply with that requirement.)

What did function reliably at the plant, according to allegations contained in the Rangers investigative report, was a system of political fundraising and backscratching.



Credit: The Texas Tribune

“They were playing politics with people’s water,” said Israel Reyna, an attorney who represents citizens groups in Rio Bravo and El Cenizo. “You can’t do that. You just cannot do that.”

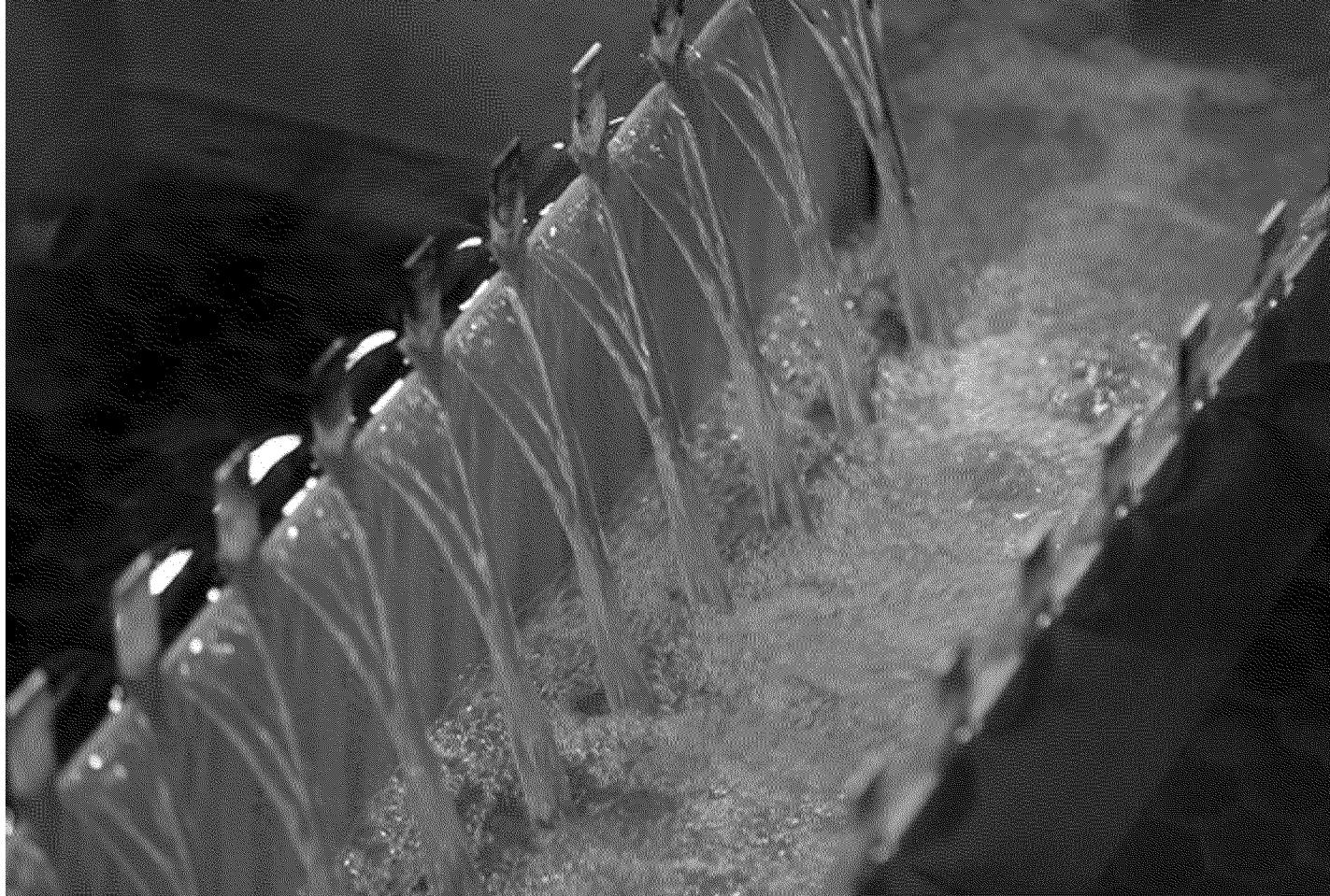
In interviews with more than a dozen current and former Webb County employees, the Texas Rangers were told that water utilities workers routinely were asked to sell tickets for dances or plates of steak – a common way to fundraise in Webb County political races.

If the workers refused or raised less money than was expected, many told the Rangers, they would be demoted, given menial tasks or threatened with dismissal.

One water utilities department employee, Magdalena Sosa, “stated she had to sell or buy \$200 worth of tickets every two weeks” or she could be fired or transferred, the Rangers wrote in their report.

Francisco Romero, a former water plant operator, also told the Rangers that he and others “were pressured into selling tickets or risk getting terminated.”

Romero and most other workers interviewed said the tickets were for the campaign of Frank Sciaraffa, commissioner for the precinct in Webb County that includes Rio Bravo and El Cenizo. Sciaraffa served as commissioner from 2005 to 2012 and was re-elected again in 2014. Sciaraffa did not respond to multiple requests for comment.



Water enters a phase of treatment at the Rio Bravo treatment plant, which was finished in 2006 with \$12 million in state funds.

Credit: Jennifer Whitney/The Texas Tribune

“When I returned the tickets I did not sell, Mr. Amaya yelled at me and asked me why I had not sold the tickets,” Jorge Mancha, a former operator at the water plant, told the Rangers. “Some of the guys confided in me that they felt like they were being punished for not selling the tickets,” another said.

According to audio recordings of his conversations with investigators, Amaya said he sold tickets himself, but didn’t force anyone else to do so, and couldn’t remember whom they were for.

“Nobody put pressure on me,” he said.

Amaya did not respond to cellphone messages and emails seeking comment, and his lawyer did not respond to an email seeking comment.

The Rangers also found documents in the water department's storage room, including "several lists with employees' names and how much they owe or amount of ticket sales," the investigators' report said.

Gabino Cerdá, another water utilities employee the Rangers interviewed, told them: "I believe no one was forced to sell tickets." He added that the tickets were "to help the needy," though he also acknowledged delivering revenues from those sales to Sciaraffa and other commissioners "on county time," according to the investigators' report.

Cerdá is one of the three remaining people facing criminal allegations of lying about water quality to state regulators and will have a court hearing this month.

Workers also told the Rangers of signs of neglect at the Rio Bravo Water Treatment Plant. They said they were encouraged to work there without licenses, and some unlicensed operators were left alone at the plant during the holidays. Others said workers were taken off their shifts at the plant in order to cook beans or clean decks for campaign fundraisers.

Amaya – who started as janitor with the county in the 1960s and worked his way up to water utilities director – was a supervisor during much of that time. Responding to the allegations, Amaya told investigators that he always believed employees worked their full shift at the plant and that it was difficult to recruit qualified licensed operators.

"I take my job seriously, and I always have," Amaya told investigators in recorded interviews, noting that some of his relatives live in Rio Bravo and El Cenizo.

"We all have families here," Amaya said he told his workers. "We have to do the best job possible. If you see of anything that's wrong, let me know. ... We'll correct it. ... We'll stop it right away."

According to the investigative reports, Amaya was reprimanded more than two dozen times for ignoring complaints, letting maintenance problems fester and helping political campaigns while on county time. He never was fired. Amaya retired two years ago, shortly after the discovery of E. coli in the drinking water.

“He’s a good, likable guy,” Tomas Rodriguez, a former supervisor of Amaya’s, said in an interview. “The only thing is, he wouldn’t apply himself to get the job done. . . . I was worried about the water not being treated to meet (health) standards.”



El Cenizo and its neighboring border town of Rio Bravo in South Texas have a brand-new water treatment plant that was supposed to provide nearly 10,000 people here with clean drinking water. But it’s never been run properly, critics say.

Credit: Jennifer Whitney/The Texas Tribune

According to the investigative report, one of the 14 reprimands Rodriguez wrote alleged that during startup testing for the new water plant in May 2006, Amaya let the new plant go unmanned for more than four hours.

"It is your responsibility to see that the plant is manned during these tests. Johnny this is not acceptable," Rodriguez wrote.

Rodriguez tried to fire Amaya, he said, but the county judge at the time, Louis Bruni, wouldn't accept it. In addition to working for the county, Amaya was elected to Laredo's City Council and school board.

"I didn't like it, but that's the way it is," Rodriguez recalled. "I work for the judge, he's the boss, he wants me to put him back, I put him back on the payroll."

Bruni, who is no longer county judge, did not respond to requests for comment. Nor did his successor, Danny Valdez.

"I don't think it takes rocket science to know that Amaya was unable to handle that department," said Alaniz, the Webb County district attorney. "But he was kept there. The reasons why? I don't know. But those are questions obviously for the commissioners and the powers that be that were there when he was there, as to why they didn't remove him."

Alaniz added: "We didn't find any evidence that would go towards any county officials being involved in any sort of cover-up."

Of the current and former Webb County elected officials contacted by the Tribune for this story, only one responded: Mike Montemayor, who briefly took over Sciaraffa's seat as county commissioner after defeating him in a 2012 election.

In an interview, Montemayor said he often complained publicly about conditions at the water plant but was ignored.

"The only time county officials care about Rio Bravo and El Cenizo is when they're running for office," he said. "Politics is very dirty."

Montemayor himself wasn't immune to Webb County politics. He was interviewed while sitting in the Bastrop federal prison, where he was sent after pleading guilty to accepting thousands of dollars in bribes for political favors. Montemayor is appealing his 76-month sentence (<http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/webb-county-texas-commissioner-sentenced-76-months-prison-accepting-bribes-exchange-official>), which was handed down earlier this year.

"It's funny that I'm sitting here saying it in prison, but I really was never influenced by anybody," he said.

## How many Texans don't have drinkable water?



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# Benzene in traffic emissions tied to childhood leukemia

BY KATHRYN DOYLE



A child with leukemia lies on her bed in the onco-hematology department of the Iashvili Central Children's Hospital in Tbilisi April 7, 2011.

REUTERS/DAVID MDZINARISHVILI

(Reuters Health) - Traffic pollution near the home – and specifically, benzene in the air – increases the risk of one type of childhood leukemia, according to a nationwide study in France.

Leukemia, or cancer of the blood cells, is the most common cancer among children younger than age 15, according to the U.S. National Cancer Institute.

Childhood leukemia is a very rare disease, so it is hard to have enough cases in one study to determine which risk factors play a role, but according to this and other large surveys, the evidence seems to be pointing toward an association between traffic emissions and childhood leukemia, said coauthor Denis Hemon of the Institute National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médical (INSERM) based in Paris.

"Overall I would say the balance is in favor of an association," Hemon told Reuters Health by

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phone.

The researchers used a nationwide study of 2,760 childhood leukemia cases in France compared with 30,000 kids who did not have leukemia between 2002 and 2007.

They used residential addresses to estimate proximity to traffic, including distance to nearest major road and total length of roads near the home, as well as estimates of benzene concentrations specifically for the Paris metro area.

Children who lived more than 500 meters from the nearest road were used for reference, having the lowest traffic exposure, and those who lived 150 meters or less from a major road had the highest exposure.

More than 2,000 of the leukemia cases were acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), while only 418 were acute myeloblastic leukemia (AML).

A 300 meter increase in major road length within 150 meters of the home appeared to increase the risk of AML by 20 percent, but did not affect the risk of ALL, when the researchers compared the leukemia groups and the comparison group.

There were similar results specifically in the Paris metro area when benzene levels were included in the analysis, as reported in the American Journal of Epidemiology.

Benzene concentrations near Paris ranged from 0.3 to 8.5 micrograms per cubic meter.

According to the Air Quality in Europe Report 2014 by the European Environmental Agency, the limit to environmental levels of benzene should be 5 micrograms per cubic meter, although the World Health Organization has not set an air quality guideline for benzene.

Short-term benzene exposure may cause drowsiness, dizziness, and headaches, as well as eye, skin, and respiratory tract irritation, while long-term inhalation exposure in occupational settings has caused various disorders in the blood, including reduced numbers of red blood cells and aplastic anemia, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Though benzene is carcinogenic for adults, it is not clear how benzene exposure would cause AML in children, Hemon said.

High radiation exposure can cause leukemia, as can genetic risk factors like Down Syndrome, and there may be other risk factors we do not know about, he said.

Evidence is starting to mount that exposure to traffic emissions early in life is tied to childhood leukemia, either only to AML or just more strongly to this than to other forms of leukemia, said professor Marco Vinceti of the Universita di Modena e Reggio Emilia in Italy, who has studied this question but was not part of the French paper.

"Our study as well found the same association with leukemia," Vinceti told Reuters Health by phone. "We looked at particulate matter and benzene, and the results were that there was no association for particulate matter."

The French study was large and carefully avoided selection bias by including data from all patients diagnosed in the country, he said.

There seems to be a stronger link between benzene and leukemia in Europe than in the U.S., though it is unclear why, he said.

Though benzene levels have sharply decreased in Europe in recent years, and the levels in the current study are largely well below European regulations, childhood leukemia cases have

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not decreased, Vinceti said. This may be due to other risk factors, like genetics, he said.

There is not much an individual can do to reduce exposure to traffic emissions in a big city, other than supporting legislation to further reduce automobile emissions, Hemon said.

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SOURCE: [bit.ly/1Md0lit](http://bit.ly/1Md0lit) American Journal of Epidemiology, September 15, 2015.

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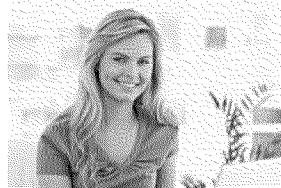
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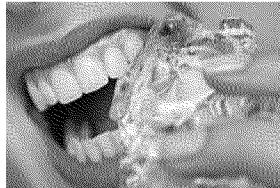
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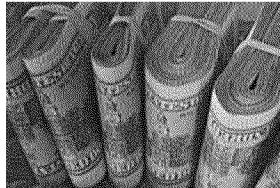
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# EPA Officials to Testify at October 8 VW Hearing in Congress

By REUTERS OCT. 6, 2015, 10:24 A.M. E.D.T.

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WASHINGTON — Two senior officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will testify on Thursday at a congressional hearing on the Volkswagen AG emissions cheating scandal, the oversight committee said on Tuesday.

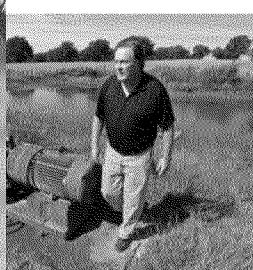
A memo released by the House Energy and Commerce Committee identified the witnesses as Christopher Grundler, director of EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality, and Phillip Brooks, director of the agency's Air Enforcement Division.

(Reporting by David Morgan; Editing by Chizu Nomiyama)



# Halliburton offers settlements to property owners in Duncan

By Published: October 4, 2015



out water contamination at Twin Oaks Sept. 22 in Duncan. The pumps are used to move water from a well into a retaining pond that is used to irrigate a golf course. Photo by Steve Sisney. The Oklahoman

#USEYOURENERGY

ome four years after testing found pollution from spent rocket fuel in the groundwater, Halliburton is offering settlements to property owners after the chemical compound ammonium perchlorate showed up in their private wells.

As an October trial date neared for one of the largest lawsuits against Halliburton, the company began settling with many Duncan residents this summer, records show.

According to documents filed in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma, Halliburton has offered settlements to 130 plaintiffs involving more than 80 properties in Duncan.

Halliburton declined to comment on the settlements because several lawsuits are still ongoing, the company said in a statement.

“While Halliburton has been settling reasonable claims since the beginning of the case, the litigation is still underway, so we are unable to offer more specific comments at this time,” the company said.

As of Oct. 1, 83 plaintiffs representing 56 properties have agreed in principle to the settlement, according to court documents.

Todd Ommen, an attorney with the New York-based environmental law firm Weitz & Luxenberg that is representing many of the Halliburton plaintiffs, said he could not discuss the terms of the proposed settlement, which are confidential.

Ommen said he has been working to present the settlement to all of the Duncan plaintiffs and to give them time to evaluate the offer.

According to a court filing dated Aug. 17, Halliburton is in the process of settling most of the claims that the contamination has diminished the value of many of the plaintiffs' land and homes.

Chickasha attorney Wes Johnston also has been able to negotiate settlements with Halliburton for more than 20 property owners and still has two lawsuits pending against the company.

“A good deal of the folks have expressed that it has gone on for a long time and they are glad they have the opportunity to just move on and do something else with their lives,” Johnston said. “Some cases are still pending and we'll see what happens with those.”

Johnston was not able to talk about the terms of the confidential settlements. Many of his clients claimed the discovery of the perchlorate in their groundwater hurt their property values.

He believes Halliburton became motivated to settle with many Duncan residents as the October trial date grew near.

“With the trial date looming, there was some interest by the company to go forward and make an attempt to settle these cases,” Johnston said.

“The folks were looking forward to presenting their cases in front of a jury, but here we have a settlement and it was on terms that were agreeable to all of the parties.”

Not all satisfied

Don Elsworth, who owns Duncan's Twin Oaks Golf Course is one of the largest commercial property owners who is holding out for a better offer from Halliburton.

Twin Oaks' property value was diminished after ammonium perchlorate was found in the well water used to water the course, Elsworth believes.

Halliburton has offered to purchase the golf course, but has not yet made an acceptable bid, he said.

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# THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

## Denton Announces Renewable Energy Plan

by Eleanor Dearman | Oct. 6, 2015 | 4 Comments



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Photo by Mike Baker

\*Correction appended  
 Denton announced a lofty plan Tuesday that aims to make the North Texas city one of the cleanest energy providers in

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the state.

Mayor Chris Watts announced a Denton Municipal Electric plan to have 70 percent of the city's electricity generated from renewable sources like wind and solar power by 2019, up from 40 percent.

"The renewable Denton plan is our proposed answer to the citizens' requests of how can we increase that number," Watts said at a news conference Tuesday.

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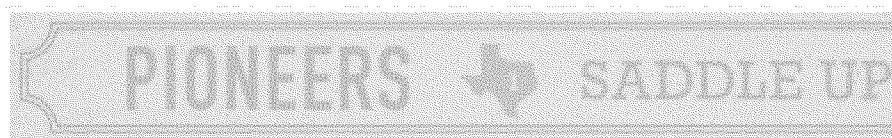
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energy fuels roughly 10 percent of electric generation on the grid. Denton's plan follows in the footsteps of other cities across the state that are relying less on traditional electricity sources like coal and gas power plants. For example, Austin and San Antonio are working to expand their use of solar power, and Georgetown is planning to cut out non-renewable energy sources altogether.



To help meet its goal, Denton will create the Denton Energy Center, which will use standards set by the federal Clean Air Act to limit pollutants.

The facility will "be one of the cleanest energy generation facilities in ERCOT"—the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which oversees Texas' electric grid, according to a statement from Mike Grim, Denton Municipal Electric's executive manager in charge of power supply.

This is not Denton's first attempt at an environmental overhaul. The city already had a similar plan in place, aiming to use 70 percent renewable energy by 2030. The new plan accelerates that timeline.

Watts said using 100 percent renewable energy is not realistic in Texas, where weather can be unpredictable. To compensate, Denton's plan includes a quick-start plant, fueled by natural gas, designed to power the city when the elements aren't favorable to renewable energy generation.

"One of the challenges of renewable energy is that it's so hard to predict," Watts said. "You don't know exactly when the sun is going to shine or when the wind is going to blow. To maintain that reliable power, you must have backup power."

Denton's current renewable energy use is almost entirely from wind power. The new plan will increase that and add solar power to the renewable energy mix. Solar energy now makes up a tiny fraction of the state's energy supply, but experts say the market is poised to grow.

Denton officials estimate the plan will save residents \$500 million over 20 years. They did not immediately provide information on how much the plan will cost the city.

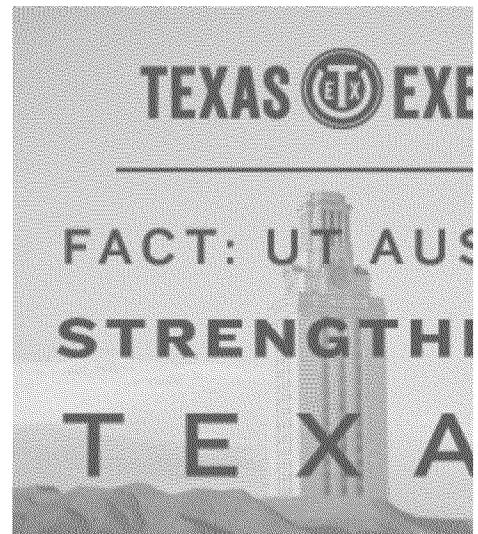
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Denton operates using a municipal electric utility, which is less common since the state's decision to deregulate the power market more than a decade ago. Often, municipalities are seen as more apt for setting ambitious environmental initiatives given their ability to think long term about cost and environmental impact.

*Correction: A previous version of this story gave an incorrect share of renewable energy fueling Texas' electric grid.*

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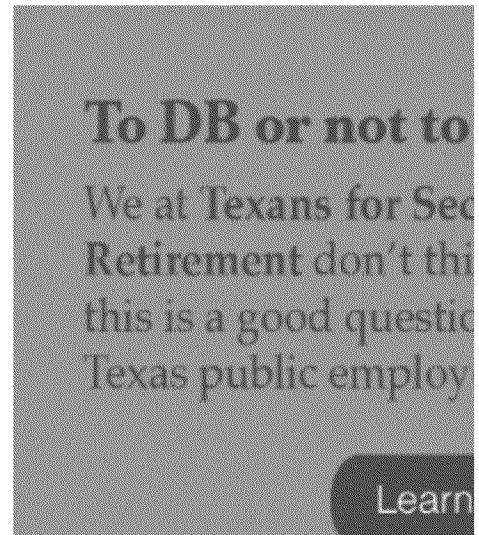
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# Keystone XL developer seeks different approval for route

BY GRANT SCHULTE, Associated Press • Published: October 6, 2015

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The Canadian company that wants to build the Keystone XL pipeline is taking steps to circumvent one of the major roadblocks in Nebraska.

But in seeking approval Monday for the same contentious route through the state, TransCanada could create another round of lengthy delays in an already drawn-out process.

It also indicates a new push for the \$8 billion Canada-to-Texas oil pipeline in a state where opponents have repeatedly thwarted efforts to build the project. President Barack Obama has indicated that he may reject a federal permit for the project, as he did in 2012 when he accused congressional Republicans of setting an arbitrary deadline.

Former Gov. Dave Heineman approved the Nebraska route in 2013 under a state law that allowed TransCanada to use eminent domain against holdout landowners, but opponents sued and the project has been mired in state courts ever since.

The state's Public Service Commission, which regulates pipelines, taxis and other "common carriers" used for transportation, offers another avenue for approval — one opponents have said they would have preferred the company use in the first place because the PSC can impose additional requirements. However, the PSC's eventual decision can be appealed.

TransCanada announced last week that it would withdraw its eminent domain claims to the land on the pipeline's proposed route and instead seek approval through the commission. Legal experts said the company may have decided not to risk a legal battle to try to uphold the 2013 pipeline-siting law, which the Nebraska Supreme Court allowed to stand by default in January. Opponents then filed a nearly identical lawsuit with landowners who were directly affected by TransCanada's use of eminent domain.

The case, which is set to go to trial Oct. 19, is widely expected to return to the state's highest court, and if it sides with the landowners, TransCanada would have to apply to the PSC anyway.

"The writing's kind of on the wall," University of Nebraska law professor Anthony Schutz said. "The prospect of losing was significant enough that they probably looked at the tea leaves and said, 'Why don't we just go forward with that process now?'"

Landowners who sued to block the project are pleased with TransCanada's PSC application, but landowners attorney Dave Domina said they want the pipeline-siting law to be invalidated to eliminate any chance that company officials try to use it again.

Domina said the decision to withdraw its eminent domain claims will delay the project further, pointing to a state law that imposes a two-year waiting period on new eminent domain proceedings if the original one is abandoned.

Attorneys for TransCanada said that law doesn't apply, because the company withdrew their lawsuits against landowners before the proceedings were officially considered "abandoned" under state law.

"Those who believe continuous delay of this project is some kind of victory couldn't be any further from the truth," TransCanada spokesman Mark Cooper said Tuesday, also noting that the company will "reinitiate" eminent domain proceedings "if necessary." Cooper said 91 percent of landowners along the Nebraska section of the route have agreed to easements, and that eminent domain is a "last resort."

The elected, five-member Public Service Commission — currently four Republicans and one Democrat — serves in a role more akin to judges than politicians. Members are forbidden from prejudging any project, and base their decisions on evidence presented by attorneys, such as a project's environmental impact, jobs created and support or opposition from local governments.

TransCanada announced the project in 2008 and has undergone repeated federal and state reviews, including a 10-month examination by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. The pipeline would be built from Canada through Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska, where it would connect with existing pipelines in Steele City to carry more than 800,000 barrels of crude oil a day to refineries along the Texas Gulf Coast.



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## food for thought

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The debate about sustainable diets has focused on meat production, which requires lots of land and water to grow grain to feed livestock. It also contributes to methane emissions. But the cabinet secretaries with final authority say the 2015 dietary guidelines won't include sustainability goals.

*David McNew/Getty Images*

When it comes to eating well, should we consider both the health of our bodies *and* of the planet?

Earlier this year, as we reported, the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee concluded that a diet rich in plant-based foods promotes good health — and is also more environmentally sustainable. And, for the first time, the panel recommended that food system sustainability be incorporated into the federal government's dietary advice.

But, it turns out, the idea of marrying sustainability guidance with nutrition advice proved to be very controversial.

And now, President Obama's two cabinet secretaries who will oversee the writing of

the guidelines say they will not include the goal of sustainability.

"We will remain within the scope of our mandate ... which is to provide nutritional and dietary information," write U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Sylvia Burwell, secretary of Health and Human Services, in a joint statement.



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The two secretaries went on to say that "we do not believe that the 2015 DGA (Dietary Guidelines for Americans) are the appropriate vehicle for this important policy conversation about sustainability."

The statement came just one day in advance of a much anticipated congressional hearing. Secretaries Vilsack and Burwell are scheduled to testify before the House Agriculture Committee Wednesday morning on the topic of the dietary guidelines.

Advocates have been pushing for inclusion of sustainability goals. The consulting group Food Minds analyzed 26,643 written, public comments submitted to the federal government on the topic of the dietary guidelines. They found that write-in campaigns by the advocacy groups Friends of the Earth, Food Democracy Now and My Plate, My Planet were the top three sources of comments.

Last week, in an editorial published in *Science* magazine, Kathleen Merrigan of George Washington University and a group of co-authors wrote that adopting a reference to sustainability in the dietary guidelines would "sanction and elevate the discussion of sustainable diets."

Merrigan argues that "by acknowledging benefits of sustainability, the government would open itself up to greater demand for sustainability investments and would signal to consumers that such foods are preferred."

The debate about sustainable diets has focused on meat production. As we've reported, meat production uses lots of land and water to grow grain to feed livestock. It also contributes to methane emissions.

"There are a lot of complex issues around livestock production that suggest — quite strongly — that we need to reduce meat consumption for sustainability reasons," Merrigan told us.

And other foods also have an environmental footprint that we should not ignore. Take, for instance, almonds.

"It takes up to 2.8 liters of water to produce a single 'heart-healthy' almond," Merrigan and company write in the editorial.



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"With 80 percent of the world's almonds growing in drought-stricken California, should consumers be advised to limit almond consumption and consider alternatives that consume fewer resources?" Merrigan and her co-authors ask.

The meat industry has opposed the idea of including sustainability in the dietary guidelines. "In our view, this is clearly out of scope," Janet Riley of the North American Meat Institute told us.

She says experts need a more complete understanding of how food production impacts the environment.

"If you compare 10 pounds of apples and 10 pounds of meat, the meat surely has the larger carbon footprint, but it also delivers more nutrition, it nourishes more people longer" in terms of calories and protein, says Riley.

She says, going forward, if sustainability is going to be included in the dietary guidelines, there needs to be more data and more experts at the table.

In a statement, the meat institute's president and CEO, Barry Carpenter, praised the secretaries' decision. He called sustainability "an important food issue," but one "outside of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's scope and expertise."

The dietary guidelines are updated every five years, so it's possible that this debate will

continue.

"The compelling science around the need to adjust dietary patterns to ensure long-term food security cannot be ignored," Merrigan told me after the secretaries issued their statement. "If not [in] the 2015 DGA [Dietary Guidelines for Americans], then maybe the 2020 DGAs."

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# US forecast calls for lower heating bills this winter

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press | Posted: Wednesday, October 7, 2015 12:00 am

PORLAND, Maine — Some U.S. households can expect to save hundreds of dollars this winter with a drop in heating bills, thanks to a combination of lower energy prices and warmer weather across most of the country, the U.S. Energy Department predicted Tuesday.

The department's annual outlook calls for lower heating bills, with the biggest savings for those who use propane or oil to heat their homes. The government predicts a 25 percent drop for homes using heating oil and an 18 percent drop for homes using propane, compared to last winter.

The outlook is based on a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecast that calls for warmer weather across all regions except the West, which is expected to be slightly cooler.

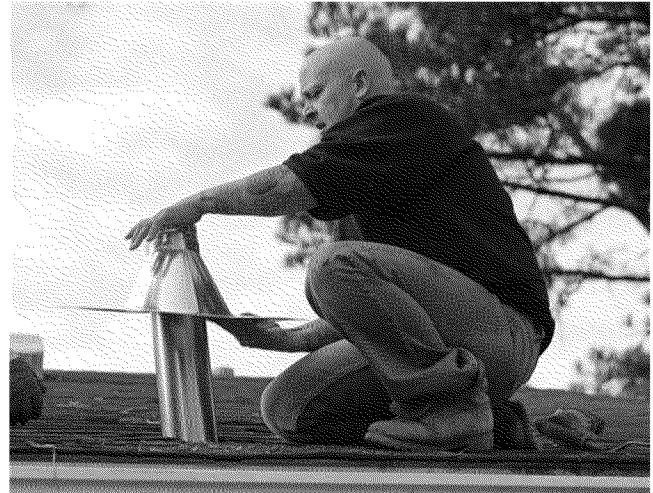
People using natural gas and electricity for heat also can expect to see a savings this winter. Heating bills for homes using electricity should drop about 3 percent and natural gas about 10 percent, the Energy Department said.

"If winter temperatures come in as expected by U.S. government weather forecasters, U.S. consumers will pay less to stay warm this winter no matter what heating fuel they use," said Adam Sieminski, administrator of the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The news is especially good in the Northeast, which is most reliant on heating oil.

Heating oil prices were at a 10-year low in the most recent survey by the state of Maine, where nearly 70 percent of homes rely on heating oil.

"It's nice to have Maine consumers catch a break because it has been a rough few years with energy bills," said Patrick Woodcock, director of the governor's energy office.



## US forecast calls for lower heating bills this winter

David Mayer, owner of Mayer's Heating Service, installs a roof vent pipe as part of a new direct vent furnace last winter in East Wareham, Mass. Heating bills should drop this winter for most U.S. households, thanks to a combination of lower energy prices and warmer weather, the U.S. Energy Department said in its annual prediction.

(AP Photo/Stephan Savoia, File)

If the forecast holds, it'll mean hundreds of millions of dollars that U.S. residents can save or spend elsewhere. But judging by last year's forecast, consumers probably shouldn't spend the savings just yet.

Last year, the forecast called for warmer temperatures across the country. That held true for the most part but not in the East, which suffered through a cold and snowy winter. Boston recorded more than 100 inches of snow — nearly 65 inches in February alone — and set a new snowfall record.

With that caveat, here's a breakdown by heating fuel of what's expected for households this winter:

**Natural gas:** Inventories are 15 percent higher than last year at this time, and production should see a tiny bump this winter. Residential natural gas prices are expected to drop 4 percent. Combined with warmer weather, the typical home using natural gas will pay \$578 this winter, a \$64 decline from last winter.

**Electricity:** Electricity is the only energy source whose price is not dropping. The costs are expected to be flat, but consumers will still pay less because of warmer winter temperatures. If the forecast holds, homes using electricity for heat will pay \$930, \$30 less than last year. The Northeast remains susceptible to price spikes caused by constrained natural gas supplies, which is used for power plants.

**Propane:** U.S. inventories are 24 percent higher than they were a year ago, and the supply should benefit from pipeline improvements, growing production and expanded rail capacity to bring supplies from Canada, the Energy Department said. Homes primarily using propane are expected to spend \$1,437, which is \$322 less than last winter.

**Heating oil:** Heating oil has tracked downward with lower crude oil costs, which dropped from \$115 a barrel in June 2014 to below \$50 Tuesday. Supplies should be adequate, the Energy Department said. It predicts savings of \$459 per home at a cost of \$1,392 to heat this winter.

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**AIR POLLUTION:****Regulators urge EPA to start crackdown on NOx emissions**

Amanda Reilly, E&E reporter

*Published: Tuesday, October 6, 2015*

Two state regulators' groups and California are calling on U.S. EPA to set a new national limit for nitrogen oxides pollution from big trucks as the agency puts in place a more stringent ozone standard.

Emitted by vehicle tailpipes, NOx is a key component of ground-level ozone. The regulators say a lower limit for heavy-duty vehicles would help them achieve the reductions called for under the ozone standard that EPA finalized last week.

"We urge EPA to begin a rulemaking without delay," a coalition of Northeastern states wrote to EPA last week, "to ensure that the next generation of trucks is not only more fuel efficient but also much less of a contributor to states' air quality and public health problems."

EPA last Thursday finalized the new national ambient air quality standard for ozone at 70 parts per billion -- a reduction from the 75 ppb limit set in 2008 during the George W. Bush administration ([Greenwire](#), Oct. 1).

Ground-level ozone is formed when NOx reacts with volatile organic compounds in the presence of sunlight.

NOx is released by both industrial facilities and vehicles. In some areas of the country that are home to a lot of vehicular traffic, such as the Northeast, mobile sources represent a significant proportion of total NOx pollution.

In 2011, cars and trucks accounted for 45 percent of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region's total NOx emissions, according to information presented last month at a meeting of the Ozone Transport Commission, an EPA advisory body ([Greenwire](#), Sept. 11).

In the eight states that are part of the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management, heavy-duty trucks represent the second-largest source of NOx emissions. Forty-two million people live in the NESCAUM region.

EPA's most recent NOx exhaust emission standards for trucks limited the air pollutant to 0.2 gram per brake horsepower-hour for all trucks model year 2010 and later. According to the Diesel Technology Forum, heavy-duty trucks manufactured beginning in 2010 have 98 percent lower NOx emissions than vehicles built in 1988.

In public comments submitted last week on EPA's proposed Phase 2 greenhouse gas standards for heavy-duty vehicles and engines, NESCAUM urged EPA to take another look at the NOx standard, noting that emissions continue to contribute not only to adverse public health problems such as respiratory illness but also to ground-level ozone.

Some of the most populated areas in the Northeast still have trouble meeting the 75 ppb ozone standard. Lowering the truck NOx standard further will be "critical" to meeting EPA's new ozone standard of 70 ppb, NESCAUM wrote.

EPA "should commence rulemaking to reduce NOx from heavy-duty vehicles at the earliest possible date," the Northeastern group wrote.

The National Association of Clean Air Agencies, which represents most state and local air regulators across the country, last week also called for a stronger NOx standard in a comment on the greenhouse gas proposal.

Although EPA's greenhouse gas rule may result in some NOx reductions, it is "not sufficient" in light of the strengthened ozone standard, NACAA said. According to the Diesel Technology Forum, the proposed standards would reduce NOx by 90,000 tons by 2025 and 260,000 tons by 2035.

The regulators' group called on EPA to include in its final greenhouse gas rule a "clear discussion" about the need for more NOx reductions from big trucks and make an "explicit commitment" to immediately begin a rulemaking.

"We are very disappointed that EPA has not included such a discussion in this proposal," NACAA said.

California

California regulators are also calling for a stronger nationwide limit on NOx emissions from heavy-duty vehicles and engines.

While there's been improvement in California air quality, the state still contains some of the worst areas in the country for ozone pollution. Regulators estimate that just meeting the 75 ppb standard will require an 80 percent reduction in NOx emissions in the South Coast Air Basin.

In a draft analysis last week, the California Air Resources Board (ARB) found that more NOx reductions could be achieved by heavy-duty vehicles through a combination of strategies, including reducing NOx that is emitted during cold starts and at low speeds, as well as increasing the use of zero-emission technologies.

The board said it plans to develop its own mandatory lower NOx standards for heavy-duty vehicles while petitioning EPA to take up a new national standard.

"ARB will develop new heavy-duty diesel engine emissions standards within the next several years, while simultaneously petitioning U.S. EPA to establish a corresponding national standard," the agency said, "in order to maximize emission reductions from all vehicles operating in California, regardless of whether they were purchased in a different state."

California already has optional statewide limits on NOx emissions that are 50, 75 and 90 percent lower than the national standard. The state put them in place to encourage engine manufacturers to develop new low-NOx technologies.

According to the California analysis, regulators are now considering a standard as low as 0.02 gram per brake horsepower-hour -- a level that they predict will cost about \$500 per vehicle averaged over the entire heavy-duty fleet.

ARB said its proposed strategy laid out in the draft document "provides a comprehensive foundation for the ongoing transformation of the state's vehicle fleet putting California on a path to likely meet the new more health-protective federal ozone standard."

The Advanced Engine Systems Institute, which represents makers of vehicle emissions control technology, has pledged to "work very hard" to meet the stricter standard that California is considering.

In a recent interview, AESI Executive Director Chris Miller said a key challenge is making sure that NOx reductions do not offset fuel economy, and vice versa. But he said the control industry is confident that it can both lower NOx and make engines more efficient.

Vehicles and engine makers will not pay to put in place lower-NOx technologies without a new standard in place, though, he said.

"Even if the technology is out there, it needs a regulatory regime to go along with that," he said.

The Diesel Technology Forum, whose goal is to raise awareness about diesel, meanwhile touted new diesel technology for heavy-duty vehicles as a means for states to achieve the new ozone standard.

"The increasing use of new generation of clean diesel technology will be an important asset for states in helping to achieve these more stringent standards," said Allen Schaeffer, executive director of the forum.

In a comment last week on the greenhouse gas rulemaking, the Truck Renting and Leasing Association said, however, that it is important to have "national uniformity" in standards. It urged EPA to work closely with California.

"It will be imperative for the EPA in particular to work with CARB going forward," the association said, "to ensure that California regulators do not stray from this approach by, for example, targeting additional NOx reductions that would upset the careful balances struck in this rulemaking."

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# In One Corner Of Dallas County, 100 People Live Without Running Water

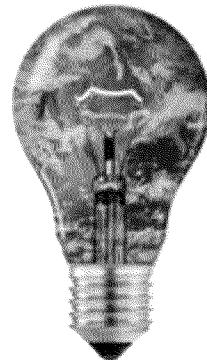
By [COURTNEY COLLINS \(/PEOPLE/COURTNEY-COLLINS\)](#) · SEP 29, 2015

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*Alvin Batts collects non-potable water from his mom's backyard tank in these jugs. He uses that to wash clothes and bottled water for everything else.*

COURTNEY COLLINS KERA NEWS



## Illuminating the Implications

Baird's investment experts weigh in on the Energy sector.

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Robert W. Baird & Co. Member SIPC.

Some communities hover over the financial edge, while others have completely fallen off. Sandbranch, an unincorporated corner of Dallas County, is one of them. Residents there have no internet, no trash pickup and no running water.



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They rely on donations, creativity and community spirit to survive.

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3:21

*The KERA radio story*

Nobody in Sandbranch has a running faucet. A lucky few have wells and small tanks in the backyard. They use that water to flush toilets, maybe wash some clothes. Even when the water is boiled, it's not drinkable.

Pastor Eugene Keahey twists the top off the water tank at Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, the one remaining community institution here, to reveal green algae in patches the size of a phone book.

That's why, Keahey explains, this water isn't for drinking, just for flushing. And that pretty much sums up life in Sandbranch.

"It's off the grid. It's a Third World country," he says. "Because water is gold here, it's precious."

Just Miles From Downtown Dallas

While this neighborhood feels worlds away from the hustle of the big city, the glittering Dallas skyline is just a short drive away. It's 18 miles southeast of downtown, and a couple miles west of Seagoville.

Sandbranch is surrounded by development, but it's virtually undeveloped.



[Flood Plain Relocation](http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kera/files/styles/xlarge/public/201509/photo_2_0.jpg)

*Algae inside the Mount Zion church water tank.*

CREDIT COURTNEY COLLINS / KERA NEWS

"Each home here was hand built by the community; there was no outside, general contractors, and this land has been in their families for years," Keahey says. "So they have a strong connection to the land and to the community."

Dallas County has records of Sandbranch dating back to the 1930s. Keahey says families settled here not long after slavery ended.

[Flood Plain Relocation](http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kera/files/styles/xlarge/public/201509/photo_2_0.jpg)

About a decade ago, Dallas County moved 36 families out of Sandbranch because their homes were in a flood zone.

Now the community has dwindled to just over a hundred people scattered across nine blocks. And those residents still don't have water or trash service.

"How can they move when their income is \$721 a month? When they have no internet, how do you find an apartment, how do you find a home? How do you save up for the down payment of a new house?" Keahey wonders.

The remaining residents of Sandbranch have to be creative.

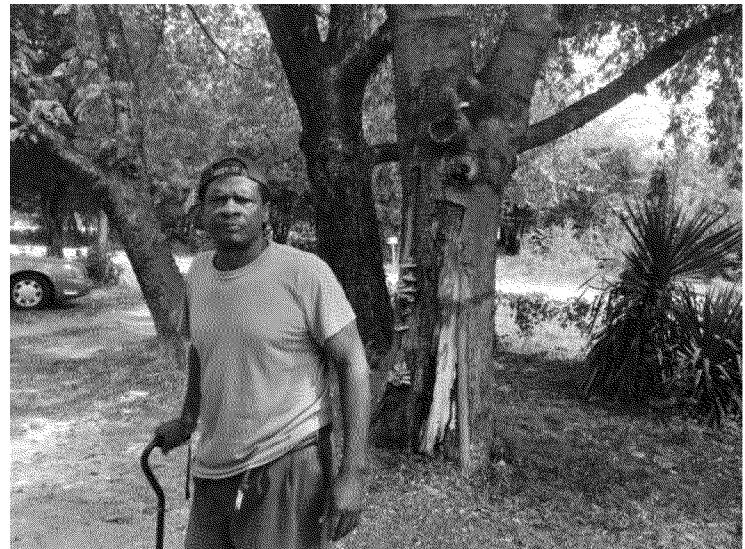
Some bring jugs of water home from work; others fill up at relatives' homes.

### Inside A Neighborhood Where Water Is Precious

Alvin Batts has lived here for half a century. He hauls five-gallon bottles to his mom's house down the street to stock up on non-potable water from her tank.

For drinking water, it's a different story.

"When we got a little money we go to the store and we buy water," Batts says. "We've been trying to get water down here for awhile."



The Dallas County health department says the vast majority of well water in Sandbranch is undrinkable.

[\(http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kera/files/\)](http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kera/files/)

*Alvin Batts has lived in Sandbranch since the 1960s.*

CREDIT COURTNEY COLLINS

Attempts to annex the community into Dallas have all failed, and in the early 2000s, a push to build a grant-funded water system was shut down, too. The project would have cost a few million dollars, and at the time, half the community would have been underwater in a major flood.

As a result, folks in Sandbranch brush their teeth with bottled water, and burn trash in the backyard. In 2015.

"I mean we have more of don't-haves, than we actually have," Keahey says.

## Seeds Of Hope

Even so, Keahey soldiers on. The North Texas Food Bank and other nonprofits send over drinking water whenever they have it. And several plots of land were just donated to the community for an urban farm.

Seeds of hope, sprouting in a neighborhood that could use some.

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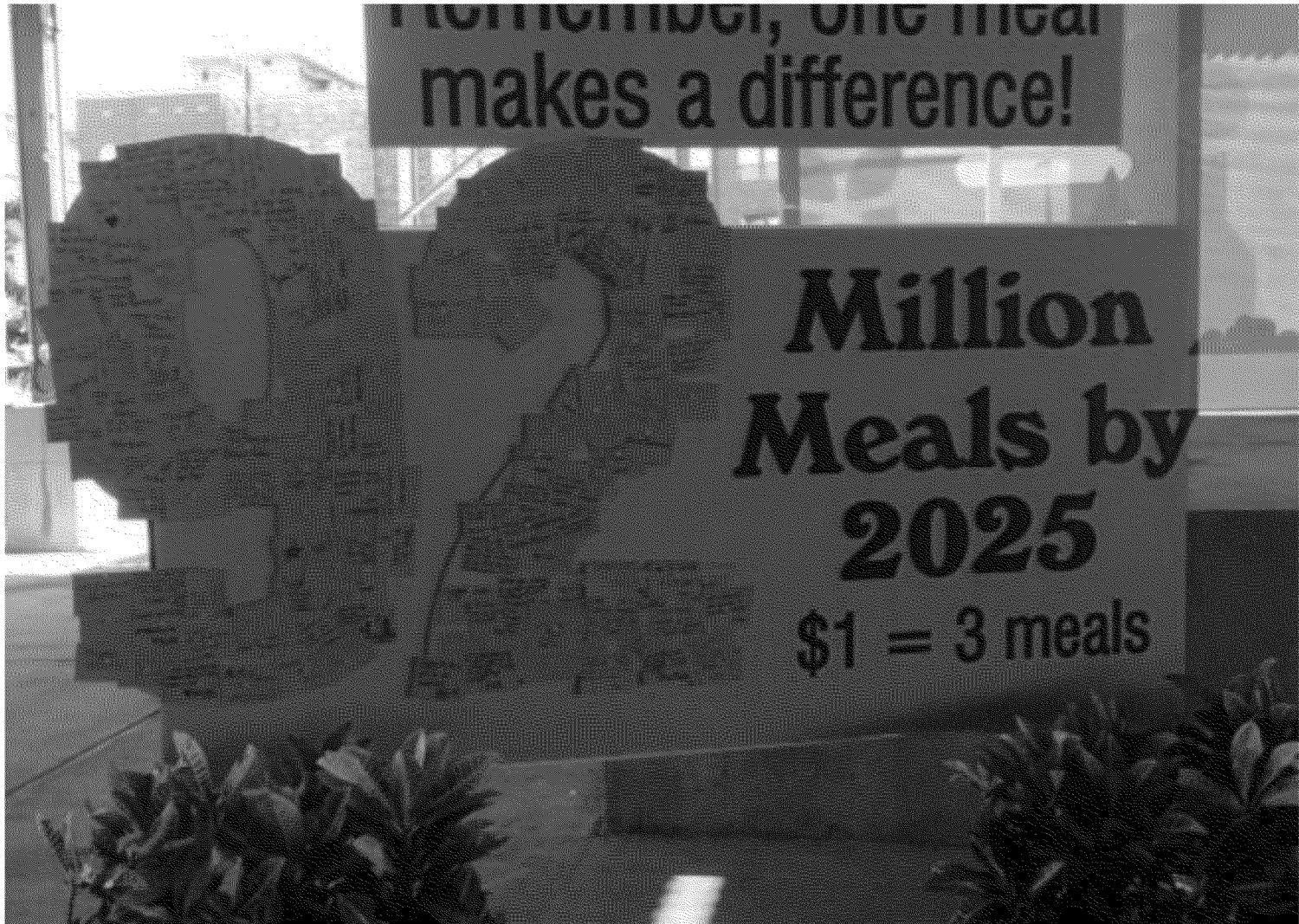
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One meal makes a difference!

30  
Million  
Meals by  
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\$1 = 3 meals

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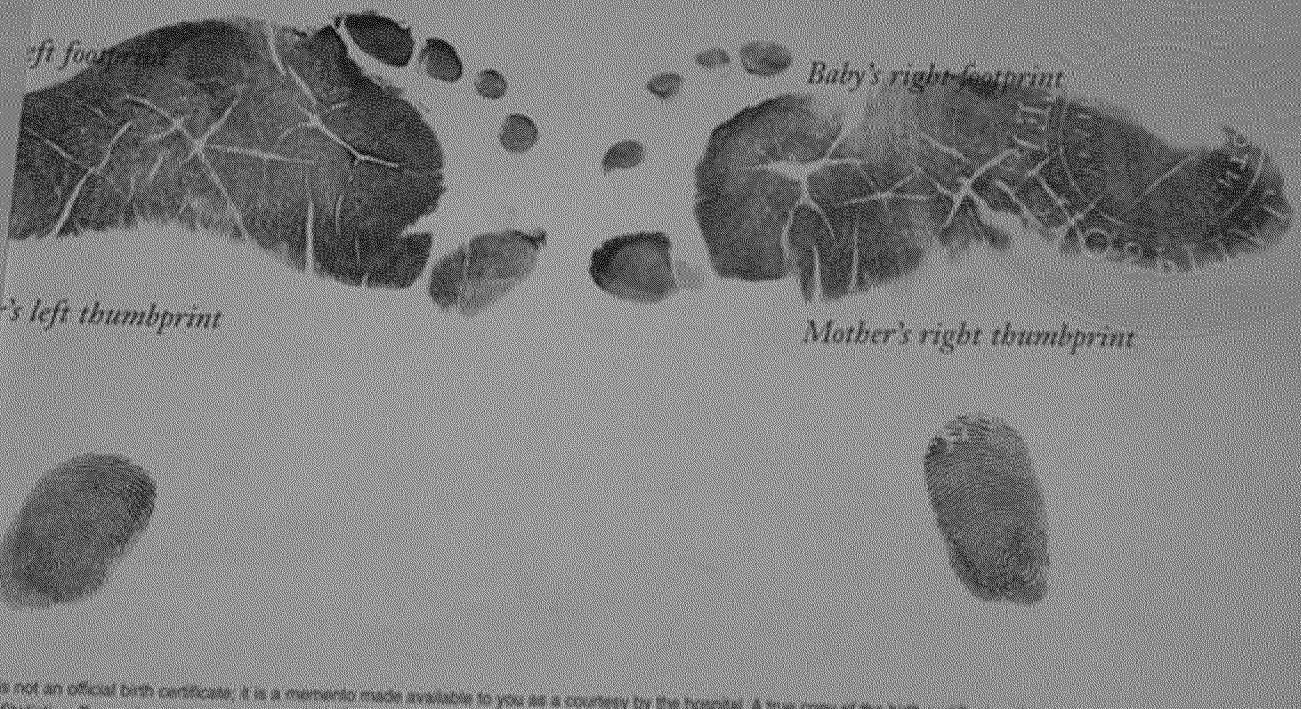
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full name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
maiden name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
at time child was born \_\_\_\_\_  
child \_\_\_\_\_ Weight at birth \_\_\_\_\_ lbs. \_\_\_\_\_ oz. Length \_\_\_\_\_ inches



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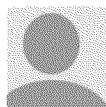
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